1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2

A comparison of the three branches of the Negrito race in the light of present information shows that the usual form of habitation amongst them is a sloping roof or screen of palm-leaves. One form of this, the simplest to construct, but only suitable as a temporary shelter, is in common use amongst the Semang and is found amongst the Negritos of Casiguran. The other form, more permanent but requiring more labour to erect, is in common use in the Andamans and amongst the Negritos of Zambales. Of communal huts we have no evidence in the Philippines. The communal shelter of the Semang consists of two screens leaning towards one another. The two types of communal hut of the Andamans are both derived from the family hut.

HUNTING, FISHING, ETC.

The Andaman Islanders depend for their subsistence entirely upon the natural productions of the forest and the sea. They make no attempt whatever to cultivate the soil. Until the introduction of dogs in 1858 they had no domestic animals. Young pigs are occasionally kept in captivity till they are grown, but they are killed for food and are not bred in captivity. Thus the Andamanese provide themselves with food by three different forms of activity: (1) collecting such things as roots and fruits and honey, (2) fishing in the sea and in the creeks, (3) hunting the wild animals of the forest.

For hunting the Andamanese rely entirely on the bow and arrow. Since they have had dogs they occasionally make hunting spears, but they did not do so in former times. They make no use whatever of any method of trapping game or birds. For fishing they also make use of the bow and arrow, wading out on to the reefs and shooting the fish, and in this they are very skilful. Crustaceans, such as crabs and cray-fish, are captured in the same way. In the North Andaman a sort of short fish spear was formerly in use as an occasional substitute for the bow and arrow. In all parts of the islands small nets are used by the women for catching small fish and prawns. In the Great Andaman large nets were formerly used for capturing turtle, dugong and large fish near the shore. At the present time the natives of the Great Andaman Division make use of harpoons with which they capture turtle, dugong and large fish from their canoes. Harpoons are not used in the Little Andaman. The Andamanese are also aware of methods of poisoning or stupefying fish in pools by means of certain plants that they crush and place in the water, but I have never seen them use this method of

2: Man G-5 (1869-1880) 1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

Agriculture.— 1. Before the arrival of strangers in their midst 241
the Andamanese were entirely ignorant of agriculture, and to this circumstance is primarily to be attributed their degraded condition, while it also affords evidence of the same.

2. Notwithstanding the ample opportunities that they have now had of observing the benefits derived from cultivation, and though they undoubtedly prefer such products to the spontaneous vegetation of their jungles, they still consider that the exertion necessary to obtain the former far outweighs every advantage; in short, it is their opinion, that "*le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle.*"

3. We must not, however, lose sight of the fact that as they have hitherto seen only prisoners engaged in tillage, they cannot but be strengthened in the objections entertained by most savages to all such labour, regarding it as a degrading occupation, and fit only for such as have forfeited their freedom.

4. Further, to quote from Peschel, "it must be remembered that hunting affords supreme enjoyment, and that agriculture has nothing to offer in compensation for the excitement and delights of the chase."

Training and Domestication of Animals.—1. Prior also to our occupation of these islands, the Andamanese, as will have been already inferred,[1] possessed no dogs, and it was some time (1865) before they became aware of their usefulness in the chase; but now that the intelligence of certain breeds has been proved, they prize them highly, and eagerly accept any we have to give them; at the same time, though treated with every intentional kindness, and allowed to sleep, and even to eat and drink out of the same vessel as their masters, the training to which the dogs are subjected is very severe, and their attenuated condition bears witness to the state of semi-starvation in which they are commonly kept in order to render them the more keen in hunting. The custom of summoning dogs by whistling has of course been borrowed from ourselves, as is also the practice of naming them; "Jack" or "Billy"[2] are the names generally bestowed by these people upon their canine companions, whom also they address as *ligʻala* (children), and who in their turn seem greatly attached to their new owners, and testify their affection by attacking all strangers, not being aborigines, who approach the encampment to which they belong. 231 177 [552]

2. It is regarded as a good omen to meet certain birds, while of others the contrary belief is held;[3] the absence of migratory 787

[1] *Vide ante* "Trade, Exchangeable Values, &c.," paragraph 3.

[2] They sometimes nickname them as follows:—*bī·bi-bā·ratnga-* (lit., dog-mottled), *bī·bi-ngā·nanga-* (lit., dog-beggar), *bī·bi-tā-tū·panga-* (lit., dog-bone-crusher), *bī·bi-tā-tē·ràwa-* (lit., dog-yellow), *i.e.*, according to any peculiarity that may distinguish them.

[3] *Vide ante* "Superstitions," paragraph 22.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

simultaneously with it a successful all-round regional development of the islands. 563 648

The resources of the islands having a small areal extent are very limited though the forest and sea products are fairly rich to deserve special mention. The presence of a variety of valuable species of timber in these islands has led to their exploitation since the development of the Penal settlement. The important species of timber found in the Andaman forests are padauk, garjan etc. In the previous decades, the forest exploitation was never associated with a commensurate amount of forest regeneration. Such policies are being followed at present for saving the forest resources from ruthless exploitation without any adequate means of ensuring a perennial supply of timber by systematic regeneration. The recent colonisation scheme has invoked the enquiry for the clearance of the forests. Andaman forests being rich in timber and also being the only major revenue earning source of the islands should by no means be ruthlessly cleared for settlement. Not only it depletes the forest resources but also degenerates the soil—the soil erosion being the immediate victim after such clearance of forests. Considering the primary importance of the forest resources of the islands, it seems to be a plausible agreement that at least 50% of the land should be reserved under forest cover and a further curtailment from this percentage will undoubtedly lead to serious consequences of the soil simultaneously with a great decrease in the resources of the islands. 313

The sea products range from a wide variety of products from sea shells to sea fisheries. The collection of sea shells is in vogue from a fairly long time and the sea fisheries, mostly being confined to the coastal areas, is conducted by the fishermen and the tribal people for their own consumption. There is a good deal of possibility for furthering the development of marine fisheries on a commercial scale but the lack of enterprise and capital investment has not given rise to any appreciable development. The only two enterprises of the fisheries are those of Trochus and Turbo shells by the Japanese during 1930-36 and another enterprise by a business concern in 1947. Even the present catch from the coastal areas amount to only 300 lbs., a considerable lag from the demand within the islands. 226 228

The means of earning livelihood in the islands were hunting and collecting by the aboriginal population who have not even to-day learnt the techniques of domesticating plants and also animals except the Onges who have domesticated the dogs very recently. The penal settlement and the subsequent expansion of the administrative seat at Port Blair 222 224 231 563 241

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

241 563 gave way to the development of agriculture over an extremely limited area in South Andaman — paddy cultivation and coconut plantations have succeeded quite well. The plantations of rubber, tea and coffee also developed in the South Andaman over very small areas but ultimately did not prove very successful, partially due to the lack of adequate care. Simultaneously with the settlement of the refugees, new areas are being brought under plough which had never been interfered with human hands. The growth of agriculture based on rice cultivation together with vegetable gardening, development of orchards, coconut cultivation will bring about self-sufficiency of the islands and make the people self-supporting.

Industrial development of any big scale cannot be foreseen except the lumbering industry because of the lack of resources, power and also of any appreciable home market. Besides lumbering, the fishing industry, if properly co-ordinated with the mainland, can be developed to a great extent. A number of cottage industries based on coconuts, sea and forest products have developed, of which the coirmaking has developed most.

13 The characteristics, common to the tropical islands, are to a large degree manifested in these islands. The physical environment suffers from a number of limitations. Hot and humid climate is ameliorated by the influence of the sea in all parts as none of them are more than 10 miles away from the sea. The problems of soil are quite tremendous and such signs are only discernible to a small extent in the islands which might share greater proportions in the future if adequate measures of careful cultivation are not undertaken. The natural vegetation should be carefully preserved and regenerated after the felling of the trees not only for the conservation of the vegetation but also for saving the soil from the serious consequences of erosion. The 178 cultural environment is a mosaic of variety because of the different 433 types of people who have been living in these islands, however negligible 563 their number might be. The imbalance of regional growth, being exclusively confined to the South Andaman, is being removed with the growth of settlement in the other parts of the islands and the indications of the shift in gravity of the economic interests is synchronising with the progress of settlement in the North and Middle Andamans. Mayabunder is handling a greater share in the movement of commodities and passengers. Such changes are undoubtedly very much welcome as the lowering of the disparities in the regional economy and growth speak of an all-round regional development.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans
Nicobars AZ.1

The Nicobar group of islands being separated off from the Andaman Islands by the Ten Degree Channel, though constitute a part of the continuation of the island in the north, the geographical entity of these islands are conspicuously different from that of the others. The Nicobar Islands have an area of 635 sq. miles and have 19 islands, out of which 12 islands are inhabited. The human habitats are exceedingly interesting and these people are distinctly different from the aborigines of the Andamans not only in their physical characteristics but also in their cultural attributes. Material life is much more improved and they have been all the time experiencing a healthy growth in comparison to the rapid decay of the Andaman aborigines. Culturally the affinity seems to be closer with the Indonesian islands. Shom Pens, the highlanders of the Great Nicobar, live in perfect isolation and have an extremely primitive economy. The staple crop is coconut and a number of fruit trees and yam are also grown. Some of the islands have become extremely overcrowded and need immediate dispersal to some of the less crowded islands. A detailed geographical treatment would require much more words to say about these thriving people and their contact with the foreigners than those of the Andamans. However it remains incomplete if the study of the Nicobar Islands is not incorporated in that of the Andaman islands. Therefore, in spite of the distinct geographical contrast with the Andamans, a short geographical summary has been given at the end of the book.

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10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

621 622 [592] rather than order is given by the leader. Cipriani observes.[1] "For instance, it is very amusing for them to think that a man gives orders to others. This means that they have no real chiefs. A so-called Onge chief, or raja, is only the head of a group of families living in the same communal hut, and giving not orders but only advice. It is the most experienced man who is considered chief in the hut, but his authority if at all never goes beyond that hut. In other words no real chief exists in the Little Andaman. Notwithstanding this, there is a perfect order in the island, because nobody interferes with the work or encroches upon what can be considered the rights of others."

124 162 As is common to most of the aborigines, the Onges are generally not very receptive when the questions about their numbers and other groups are enquired. The headman says that there are many many fifty Onges. However the number of the Onges are approximately 600.

22 231 241 As regards the mode of living of the Onges, the hunting and collecting are the basis of their economy. The domestication of the plants i.e. art of agriculture is not known to them and it is only 30 years back, the dogs arrived in the island and have been domesticated by the Onges for chasing the pigs, their main prey. In the absence of agriculture, the natural products of the sea and the forest provide them with all [262] their items of diet. Animal and vegetable products and honey are the main items of their diet and there has been, so far, no introduction of salt in their diet. The most important victims of their hunting are pigs and turtles, the former is chased by dogs and are killed with great 252 cruelty. The cooking of the fish, meat, roots, tubers, jackfruits etc are 251 done by putting them under fire. Preservation of foodstuffs is not widely practised except the jackfruit seeds which are tied up in a small net inside water on the bank of some stream and taken out during rainy season, when the other vegetable foodstuffs are not available. On 146 the whole, the Onges have a very balanced diet with a fair richness of all the nutrients. In this connection the observations of Dr. Cipriani during his survey in the Little Andaman throws considerable light in [157] their conditions of life. He has estimated the Onges as one of the happiest people of the world, who in spite of their primitive economy, are not the miserable victims of poor health, ill nutrition and oddities of life.

396 Some amount of artistry and craftsmanship have developed among these people. A canoe can be constructed by a man, all by himself from

[113] 1 Cipriani, L—Survey of Little Andaman during 1954; Bul. Dept. Anth.,

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

and particularly of Oceania, but not with that of the Indian peninsula – a fact which is highly significant in any reconstructive study of the migration of flora and fauna to the archipelago.

The most recent phase in the spread of vegetation within the Andamans is less than a hundred years old; it began on Great Andaman, but none of the species has yet reached Little Andaman. The coconut has reached it during the last few years, but when I was there, there were not more than five wild palms in the whole island. The original coconuts must have floated from Great Andaman, or even the Nicobars. The Onges at once realized that they were edible, and called them *marele*. Now, however, there is a plantation of over five hundred trees to the north of Labanar, which I established by degrees on a number of occasions as a gift to the Onges.

The absence of any cultivated plants on Little Andaman led me to try pawpaws and bananas, as well as coconuts. In 1952 the Governor himself suggested a plant whose leaves are said to cure ringworm, so widespread among the Onges. The Onges, however, were not remotely interested, nor were they any more interested in the pawpaws and bananas. The pawpaws were left to lie on the ground and groves of young plants sprang up, far too close together, crowding the original tree and not sturdy enough to fruit. It was useless to show the Onges what to do. The bananas would have grown well, but their leaves were ripped to pieces by the storms. Possibly they would fare better in Great Andaman, where the hills would afford some shelter from the wind.

A rather different result, but equally unfortunate, followed the importation of grass seed into Great Andaman to improve grazing. The seed, imported from Europe, must have been contaminated with *Mimosa pudica*, which has spread widely, as it did in India and the rest of southern Asia, and within a few years has destroyed the grass so widely and become so much of a pest that in some areas it is doubtful whether it can be eradicated. The area round Port Blair is full of it, but for the moment Little Andaman remains free.

Culturally, the peoples of the Andamans remain today, unlike their kin in Malaysia and the Philippines, at a level almost identical with that of their ancestors thousands of years ago. They represented then, and in great measure represent today, a pure hunting and

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

105 gathering society; it is extremely probable that a study of their daily life today is virtually equivalent to a study of their life as it was in ancient times.

231 241 177 So near are the Andamanese to their original state that they show no signs of ever having had any real agriculture. The Indian Government has tried in vain to induce the surviving Arioto to keep chickens by presenting them with birds and food for them; the gifts were accepted out of politeness, but there the matter ended. Among the remaining Negritos, however, particularly in the Philippines, there are noticeable signs of the awakening of some agricultural sense, even to the extent of some commerce, and regular attendance at markets. But on Little Andaman, for example, I saw in 1952 various ginger trees growing, brought there by some unknown means and at Entigheh there was also a pumpkin. In 1953 and subsequent years there were no pumpkins at all on the island, and although the gingers were still thriving they were clearly doing so by chance, without any attention from the Onges, who ate some of the small red fruit, and seemed to like the piquant flavour, but still showed no signs of wanting to perpetuate it. In several places both on the coast and inland I saw, too, clumps of the slender native bamboo, hardly planted intentionally; the ground sites of some huts now abandoned, like Bugheneh and Odadda, were covered in them. The inhabitants had apparently wanted to procure a supply of material for roofing mats, or the drying platforms used by a few groups, and so the plantations were completely stripped – and killed.

245 177 In order to plant coconut trees for the benefit of the islanders I had even to do the planting myself, so utterly ignorant were they of agricultural methods; we even had to do all the clearing of the undergrowth in a patch of forest, and prepare the ground. The Onges watched curiously but were quite uninterested. Why should they care for a tree for ten years to get its nuts when the island and seas around are teaming with food for the taking?

824 825 In their continual search for food the Onges have acquired botanical and zoological knowledge which seems almost innate, and they know of properties in plants and animals of which we are quite unaware. Nearly every day on Little Andaman I came across examples of this. I only had to draw a rough sketch of an animal and they knew at once where it could be found; it was only thanks

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

twining up into the trees, and the shorter-stemmed yams, are never disturbed. The Onges merely dig down, at a respectful distance from the plant, certain of finding what they want. On no account must there be any signs of the theft for the spirit to see, so they quietly take off roots or tubers some way from the main stem and leave the rest, patting the earth down afterwards and covering the place with leaves. The guardian spirit, not, apparently, all-seeing, notices nothing, as the plant continues to flourish, improved by the root pruning. Everyone, guardian spirit and Onges alike, is happy.

This unconscious preservation may well be the result of a decree, in some remote past, by an Onge seer who realized the danger of killing off the entire plants and invented the guardian spirits as a deterrent. The Negritos still make similar use of roots and tubers; Skeet and Blagden fifty years ago referred to the Semang eating poisonous wild yams, having removed the toxic substances.[1]

It is interesting that both in the past and even today a number of peoples at a very early stage of cultural development have progressed from the gathering of the wild yams of South-East Asia to the first signs of cultivation and agriculture. It is possible that they were the first plants ever to be cultivated by primitive Man, the Negritos with their digging sticks delving then as they do now; the genus is certainly a very ancient one, and some species, such as *Dioscorea alata*, may have spread from Asia to Africa and Oceania, and even to America, with the beginning of cultivation. But this is a stage of development which the peoples of the Andaman never reached.

The digging stick, the only implement the Onges have with which to get at the roots and tubers, has in recent times been affected, though to a very limited extent by the spread of iron. Only a few individuals possess a primitive iron tool, half a metre long, cylindrical in shape and usually not more than one and a half centimetres in diameter and flattened into a form of blade at one end. The vast majority still have only the age-old stick made of hard wood, hardly recognizable as a tool and crudely fashioned into a point at one end. This tool, so primitive that it can easily be mistaken for an odd

[1] It is interesting that the American Aborigines, especially in Brazil, do the same with manioc, but I saw nothing of this nature in the Andamans.